

31st Fighter Wing: The U.S. Air Force's fighter wing south of the Alps

THE VIGILEER

Vol. 53 No. 10

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Aviano Air Base, Italy

Fly Bys

Promotions

• Congratulations to **Lt. Col. Douglas Cordova**, 31st Fighter Wing for his selection for promotion to colonel.

• Congratulations to the following majors for their selection for promotion to lieutenant colonel: **Matt Sanford**, 31st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; **Charles DeLapp**, 31st FW; **William Jones**, 31st Operations Group; **Mara Wight**, 31st Operations Support Squadron; and **David Kretz**, 31st Services Squadron.

• Congratulations to the following master sergeants who were selected for promotion to senior master sergeant: **Greg Bozin**, **James Johns**, **Timothy Kellner** and **David Vanlack**, 31st AMXS; **Kenneth Adams** and **Edward Huk**, 31st Communications Squadron; **Marlon Carcamo** and **Joe Lowery**, 31st Logistics Readiness Squadron; **Edward Carthon**, 31st Medical Operations Squadron; **Michael Barnett**, 31st Mission Support Squadron; **Steven Loy**, 31st Maintenance Group; **Richard Barber** and **Malcom Crump**, 31st Maintenance Squadron; **Melissa Permar**, 31st Security Forces Squadron; **Jeffrey Jacobson** and **Kelly Keebler**, 603rd Air Control Squadron; **Perry McLaurin**, 704th Munitions Squadron; **Richard Hammond**, 724th Air Mobility Squadron; **David Lundquist**, 8th Air Support Operations Squadron; **Tracie Adams**, Det. 8, Armed Forces Network; and **William Plowman**, Det. 17, 372nd Training Squadron.

Excellent inspection

Second Lt. George Zampounis, NATO evaluator, left, reviews operations with **Tech. Sgt. Royce Hutchins**, 31st Maintenance Squadron, during the Tactical Evaluation here. The evaluation was to ensure Aviano Airmen are combat ready. For more information on the TACEVAL as well as how Aviano performed, see pages 10-11.

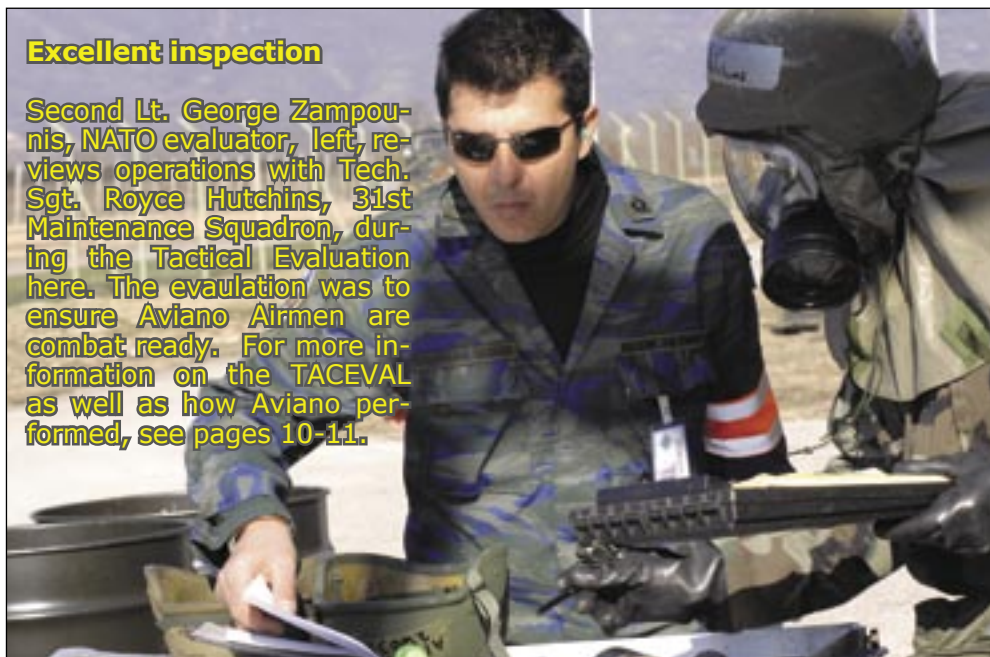


Photo by Airman 1st Class Lilliana Moreno

Survey to improve information delivery

By Maj. Robert Pope
*Secretary of the Air Force,
Office of Public Affairs*

WASHINGTON – The Secretary of the Air Force Office of Communication at the Pentagon has launched a study to find out how Airmen want to get information about the Air Force.

A randomly-selected group of Airmen and Air Force civilian employees will receive an e-mail invitation from Brig. Gen. Erv Lessel, Air Force director of communication, asking them to complete an online questionnaire to share their

views on several information sources, products, and technologies.

“This is a very important project for the Air Force, because we’re working hard to improve our Air Force information delivery channels and products so Airmen get the information they want and need, when and how they want it,” General Lessel said. “If we hear from Airmen that some of the information channels are working well while others are broken, we’ll know where to focus our attention. If Airmen tell us they flat-out can’t get some of the information they really want or need,

See Survey, Page 7

Commander's call: There will be a mandatory commander's call for all 31st Fighter Wing members at 8 a.m. or 3 p.m. today in Hangar One.

*World's Finest
MMVA/DUI counter*

5 days ...

Since Aviano's last DUI.

63 ...

Major Motor Vehicle Accidents



Survivor

A 31st Dental Squadron senior master sergeant talks about her fight against breast cancer.

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Golden mosaics

Sparkling Byzantine mosaics, history and a rich culture await travelers in the ancient city of Ravenna.

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Deadline info: The deadline for submitting information is close of business Thursday one week prior to publication. Send all information by e-mail to the Vigileer at vigileer@aviano.af.mil. Faxed articles will not be accepted. The public affairs office is located in Bldg. 1360, Rm. 19. The Vigileer staff can be reached at Ext. 7344.

Editorials: We want to hear from you. Flex your writing talents and share your thoughts with the community. Commentaries must be 500 to 700 words. Topics must be applicable to the Air Force, Aviano and appeal to the general public.

World's Finest: Messages can be submitted for appreciation, retirements, awards, good service, promotions and graduations.

From the Top: Those Who Lead

31st Fighter Wing

Commander's Corner

By Brig. Gen. Robert Yates
31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

World's Finest – Well, lots to talk about today, and some of it we'll go over tomorrow during Commander's Call. We'll begin by going over the bad news, the tough stuff. First issue: Too many DUIs.

We've had a rough patch for the past three months, averaging two per month. This WILL change. This wing felt the destructive power of DUIs in January with one tragic fatality and two very serious injuries, and it must end there. I've emphasized and re-emphasized this. Your commanders and supervisors have done likewise. Together we've slain this dragon before – 104 days without a DUI – and together we'll do it again. I call on all members of the World's Finest team to bind together to begin another streak – a long streak – of time without DUIs.

I call especially on our NCOs, SNCOs and officers to reinforce this message, to make the perspective 'zero defects' and eliminate this problem ... now and forever. The destructive nature of DUIs will not prevail over the goodness of this wing ... we will see to that together. The chain of command will slay the dragon – together and permanently.

Another focus area is Alcohol Related Incidents. ARIs are borne of over indulgence in alcoholic beverages, lack of supervision, getting lost in the supervisory shuffle due to AEF chain of command turbulence, being unaware of the many positive things available to do, and/or a combination of any of the above. The facts show that ARIs are among the most damaging events to careers and lives. The facts show that ARIs occur mainly among the ranks E-1 to E-4 and late at night (0200-0600). The fact is that if our people are our top priority, and I can assure you they are here in the 31st Fighter Wing. We need to attack this problem head on to eliminate the loss of precious human lives – to, plain and simple, take care of our people.

We have established a goal of reducing ARIs in this wing by 40 percent this year. We will do this by focusing on the problem, attacking the root causes, establishing ways to recreate positively, and ensuring all assigned to Aviano understand that we do not, and will not, tolerate the behaviors associated with ARIs. ARIs are destructive, they are not acceptable, and we will slay this dragon as well – together and permanently.

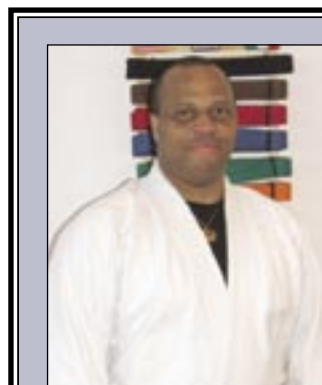
Now onto good news about the great things this wing has accomplished as a team – specifically and

most prominently, the TACEVAL! Yes, we slayed that dragon! Working our fingers to the bone since December 2006, practicing every facet of our vocation from cargo loading, passenger prep and processing, aircraft reception, aircraft generation, aircraft re-generation, combat employment, survival under mock attack, survival under mock NBC attack, and taking care of our simulated casualties – our performance was exceptional! In the end, we received 11 overall ratings with four potential grades – excellent, satisfactory, marginal, or unsatisfactory. Among the 11 possible grades, we received 6 excellent ratings, and 5 satisfactory ratings. Our overall rating was mission capable. However, the real story will be told below.

The real story is that satisfactory is the normal grade received by outstanding NATO units when they do their job very well. The real story is that an excellent in a NATO inspection is like an "outstanding" in a USAF inspection. The real story is that the World's Finest wing showed again, in our third major inspection in a year, that we are a world class wing, capable of doing our job and more, 24/7/365. Congratulations to you all ... and thanks to your families ... for your outstanding performance, hard work and perseverance. Awesome job, well done, you all have made me, once again, proud to be called, '31st Fighter Wing commander!'

Time to wrap it up – first a couple of clean up items. I'll see you all at either 0800 or 1500 at Hangar One for Wing Commander's Call – be there. This weekend remember what I said above about DUI and ARI – do what you know is right no matter your age or rank – plan ahead, take care of your team mates, and be a proud part of the World's Finest team! And for all of us, as you enter the confines of the World's Finest Ranch, remember the excellence you have achieved over the past three months, punctuated by your masterful performance during the NATO TACEVAL. Be proud of your performance ... don't take it for granted because this achievement is rare and extremely significant!

Until next week: God bless, take care of each other/plan ahead if you are going to party/drive PIANO, and take a few moments to smell the roses!



Aviano Volunteer of the Week

Name: Staff Sgt. Shelton Macon

Unit: 31st Security Forces Squadron

Volunteerism: Sergeant Macon volunteers as a karate instructor at the Aviano Youth Center. His leadership skills in promoting teamwork, positive energy and enthusiasm radiates to all his Karate students making the program a wonderful learning experience and giving the students an opportunity for growth and success.

AFAF kicks off at Aviano

By Staff Sgt.
Colleen Wieman

31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The Air Force Assistance Fund kicks off here Monday and participants can donate through unit POCs during the six-week campaign, which runs through April 27.

Last year, the 31st Fighter Wing donated more than \$106,000, which was 133 percent of the goal.

This year, the goal is to make 100 percent contact with all Aviano members, including those at deployed locations, have greater than 50 percent participation and raise \$85,000.

The annual campaign supports four Air Force charities: the Air Force Aid Society, the Air Force Enlisted Village Indigent Widows' Fund, the Air Force Villages Indigent Widows' Fund, and the General and Mrs. Curtis E. LeMay Foundation.

These organizations provide assistance to Air Force active duty, reserve, guard and retired members and dependents through emergency financial assistance, educational grants, and community enhancements such as child care and phone home programs.

"Unlike the Combined Federal Campaign, the Air Force Assistance Fund campaign is designed specifically to help Air Force members and their families," said Master Sgt. Michael Rizzo, AFAF co-coordinator for Aviano. "Contributions are tax deductible and all of the money raised by Air Force people helps other Airmen. Ultimately, there isn't a good reason not contribute."

Air Force Assistance Fund officials say \$245,976 donated by Aviano Airmen was used by Aviano Airmen and their families in 2006.

"We are the world's greatest Air Force because we know how to take care of our people," said Capt. Aaron Saul, Aviano's AFAF coordinator. "Donating to the AFAF is just one small way to help others show we care about the World's Finest."

AFAF unit POCs

31st Fighter Wing

• Master Sgt. Timothy Garcia at Ext. 7673

31st Maintenance Group

• Capt. Lori George at Ext. 4860

• Senior Master Sgt. Cynthia Jones at Ext. 4138

31st Medical Group

• Capt. Altan Shaffer at Ext. 7970

• Staff Sgt. John Snyder at Ext. 5060

31st Mission Support Group

• Senior Master Sgt. Steven Herb at Ext. 2049

31st Operations Group

• 1st. Lt. Brian Grocki at Ext. 8052

• Tech. Sgt. Robert Dickey at Ext. 7222

724th Air Mobility Squadron

• Senior Airman Joseph Gingo at Ext. 8242

Det. 8, Armed Forces Network

• Airman 1st Class Priscilla Christensen at Ext. 4878

Det. 17, Field Training Detachment

• Staff Sgt. Aaron Le Bleu at Ext. 8603

Det. 531, Air Force Operations of Special Investigations

• Airman 1st Class Rodney Jones at Ext. 7643

USAFE tour

Maj. Gen. Marc Rogers, U.S. Air Forces in Europe vice commander, talks with Airmen during breakfast at the La Dolce Vita Dining Facility here Monday.

As part of his USAFE quality of life tour, General Rogers and his wife, Deb Rogers, visited Aviano facilities and discussed quality of life concerns with Airmen.

General Rogers became USAFE vice commander in December 2006. He is a command pilot with more than 2,600 flight hours, including 184 combat hours.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Liliana Moreno

Social: A senior master sergeant promotion social is 5 p.m. today at the La Bella Vista Club.

Crime in the local area

Courtesy 31st Security Forces Squadron

March 1 – Another individual was discovered exchanging price tags on clothing at the BX. The discounted price wasn't low enough for this culprit and he was caught in the act. Carabinieri responded and took control of the individual. In addition to the embarrassment, this member will have to shop at an alternate location. Because of thoughtless actions, the family will also have to pay the \$200 Civil Recovery Fee according to The Civil Recovery Act for the offense. *This is the fourth incident in the past three weeks. There should be no question about how good the loss prevention professionals at the BX are. You will be caught if you put your integrity on the line.*

• A military spouse reported a man came to her door trying to sell items for food. The spouse advised the man she had no money, but she would make him a sandwich. The man said he would look around and see what she had. The spouse immediately closed the door and locked her front and back door. She made the right decision and dialed 112. Carabinieri and Security Forces both responded, but were unable to locate the individual. *If a situation occurs, take the necessary steps to protect yourself and call for help. Write down identifying information on the suspect and provide to authorities when they arrive.*

March 2 – A staff sergeant visited the Police Services Desk to accomplish a statement about an individual(s) at-

tempting to gain access to his residence through the front door. The staff sergeant further stated he believed the same individual(s) followed him from his home to the entrance of the base. *Guess someone paid attention in their terrorism training.*

March 3 – A senior airman telephoned the Police Services Desk from his residence and stated a gentleman in his late 40s to early 50s, was sitting in a vehicle in a parking space at the San Qurino Built-to-Lease housing observing personnel in the area. When the senior airman approached him, he drove away. *Good job for this alert senior airman. Always stay aware of your surroundings. You never know who is watching.*

March 4 – A staff sergeant went for a bike ride and returned to find someone entered his home through an unlocked back door and took two guitars, a 30-inch TV, DVD player, SKY decoder, laptop computer, camera and a JVC video recorder. *It doesn't take long for thieves to enter your home and take everything. Even if you're going for a bike ride, lock up your home and save yourself some pain.*

• Two staff sergeants observed a suspicious individual looking around yards in Vigonovo Built-to-Lease housing. One of the staff sergeants spoke with the individual who stated he was from another country, had no money, no place to live and he would be sleeping at the Sacile train station. After the conversation, the suspicious individual left the area before Security Forces arrived.

Guests rest easy ... at Mountain View Lodge

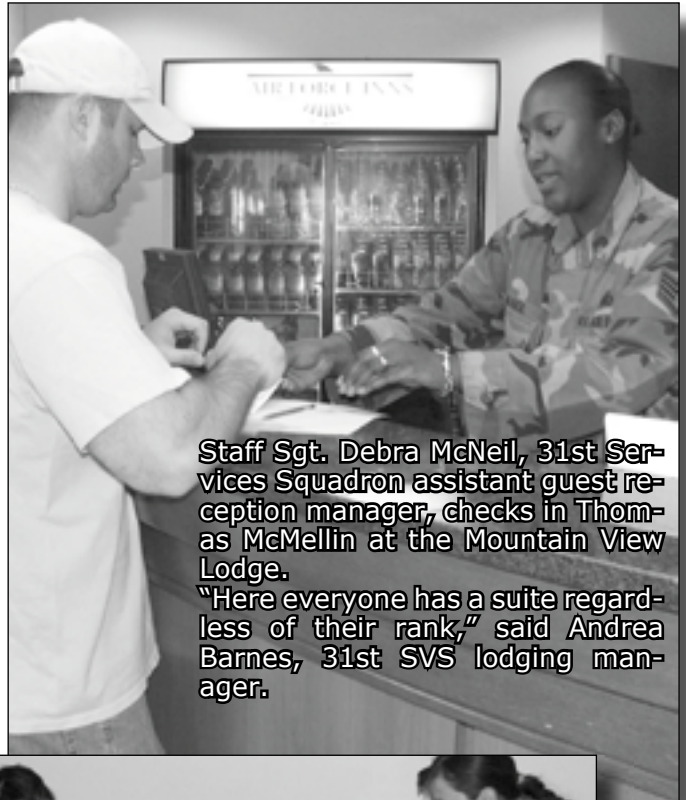


Photos by Staff Sgt. Colleen Wieman

Above: Cosimo Coppola, Mountain View Lodge maintainer, cleans a dryer in a lodging facility.

Right: Silvia Fusco, left, and Rita Varnier, Mountain View Lodge housekeepers, prepare a bed for new guests. More than 50 people take care of the Mountain View Lodge's five buildings and 172 rooms. In 2006 the Mountain View Lodge held an 85 percent occupancy rate.

Additionally, the Mountain View Lodge has a wireless business center in the lobby so guests can access the internet. The temporary lodging facilities also have wireless Internet and full kitchens.



Staff Sgt. Debra McNeil, 31st Services Squadron assistant guest reception manager, checks in Thomas McMellin at the Mountain View Lodge.

"Here everyone has a suite regardless of their rank," said Andrea Barnes, 31st SVS lodging manager.



Disaster class: A disaster preparedness class is 8 a.m. Saturday at the Airman and Family Readiness Center. To sign up, call Ext. 5576.

Survey, from page 1

we'll look hard at ways to fix that."

Researchers anticipate the results of this "Where Airmen Get Information" survey will be used to focus Air Force Public Affairs attention on the products Airmen use and value most, permitting the Air Force to cease publishing less-desired products or stop operating less-used channels.

"It's been almost three years since we last surveyed Airmen about their information wants and needs. If you think about how the information environment has changed during that time, with new media and new technologies coming on line, you see why this study is both essential and overdue," General Les-sel added.

According to Steve Everett, principle researcher in the Sec-

retary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs assessment division, the survey relies on hearing from all invited participants. Dr Everett explained, "If we hear back from only the Airmen who have computers on their desks, we won't have anywhere near an accurate, complete understanding of Airmen's information preferences. The Air Force is going to extra lengths to get the word out about this survey so invited Airmen will know it's the 'real deal' and their supervisors might give them 15 minutes of computer time to complete the survey if Airmen don't have computer access of their own. Otherwise we risk getting input only from Airmen with easy computer access, to the exclusion of people in career fields who don't have easy access to the Internet at work."

Shaping the future: Women who inspire



Brooke Nelson

Brooke Nelson is a Key Spouse within the 31st Security Forces Squadron. As a Key Spouse, Mrs. Nelson keeps in contact with the squadron's deployed spouses before and during deployments.

Before the Airmen depart for their deployment, Mrs. Nelson prepares snacks and drinks and is there to

greet Airmen when they return.

When a spouse goes through a difficult situation while their spouse is deployed, Mrs. Nelson helps them through the process and directs them to the right referral agencies.

Additionally, Mrs. Nelson also works full time at the Aviano Youth Center.

Aviano breast cancer survivor shares story

Story of Senior Master Sgt. Michelle Sobel as told to Senior Airman Sarah Gregory

Prior history – My grandmother was diagnosed and so was my aunt on my mother's side, so breast cancer was something that was prevalent in our family. In November of 1998, I had done a breast self-exam and noticed a change. After visiting the doctor, I was told exactly what I had feared: I was 36 years old, and I had breast cancer.

The discovery – The doctor noticed something during his exam and scheduled me for a mammogram. I knew the news wasn't good because by the time I had made it back from my appointment, I had already been called by the hospital. The mammogram showed calcifications, which is an indicator of potential cancer. I went back for another appointment, this time a biopsy. Immediately the doctors could tell something wasn't right.

The biopsy results showed I had intraductal cancer, which meant it was in my milk ducts. At that point the doctors didn't know if it had spread any further. I had to go see a surgeon and a plastic surgeon, because there was the potential for a mastectomy.

Facing reality – When I got the initial diagnosis I sat there stunned. I wanted to just get it out of me. It's scary walking around, knowing you have cancer.

Visiting the plastic surgeon was very traumatic because they actually show you pictures of people who had mastectomies, and they weren't very pretty. I just wanted to run out of there screaming because you see pictures of people with no breasts or reconstruction that doesn't look very good. I was young and single and that's a pretty hard thing to deal with. I couldn't even decide at that time what I wanted done. I did a little bit of research on my own and



Senior Master Sgt.
Michelle Sobel

then went back to talk to the surgeon. This time I settled on a particular type of reconstruction.

Treatment – I had no other options other than a mastectomy because the cancer was so large at that point. I had noticed something not right for years and kept pointing it out but I never had a mammogram. At the time, if your mother hadn't had breast cancer, doctors didn't recommend having a mammogram until age 40. Now, if anyone in your family has had breast cancer, they do mammograms at age 35.

The option I chose was to have the mastectomy and the reconstruction done at the same time. I came out not missing anything so it was less stressful. It's more traumatic to have a mastectomy, wait, then have reconstructive surgery.

The doctors also took some lymph nodes out to see if my cancer had spread. My mother stayed the whole time with me to take care of my daughter, who was 8 at the time. My mother being there helped me not worry about my daughter, and allowed me to concentrate on just taking care of myself.

When the results came back, they showed that out of 15 lymph nodes, none had signs of cancer. That was amazing, and it was a turning point for me. I was like OK, I'm done with this. Basically in my mind I had beaten cancer. For awhile I had a mammogram every six months and I was on a cancer-prevention

drug for five years, but I was cancer free.

When I look back, I was so lucky and blessed. I was young and healthy and everything turned out fantastic.

Bittersweet healing – When you go through something like this, you are classified as a Code C, which means you can't go overseas. I wanted to go to Aviano my whole career because my grandfather was born in San Quirino. Luckily, after my three year cancer-free mark, that code was lifted and I ended up getting assigned to Aviano. I survived cancer and got the assignment of my dreams, but shortly after I got here in 2003 my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She had a mastectomy and had to go through chemotherapy because her cancer had spread. We thought everything was great – she weathered through the rounds of chemo and her spirits were high. Then, in 2006 they found her cancer had spread to her ribs and spine. She went through chemo again and I went home in the summer to see her. After she came out of that, her tumor count had come down below normal. We thought we had weathered through this again. Then her tumor markers shot up to 80 which is really high. She had gone down to 26 after her last round of chemo. We found out her cancer spread all through her chest, her collar bone and her liver.

With it being in the liver, it doesn't really ever go away. She's terminal and there's nothing we can do now. It's very hard for me to talk about it.

Teaching others – There's one thing I learned from this: People need to take charge of their own health care. If you have a gut feeling or a concern, bring it up. I feel I should have pushed, because at every breast exam I was saying, 'Shouldn't I get a mammogram?' and they'd kind of alleviate my fears. I was easily relieved because my mother hadn't had it.

If anything, this disease has brought awareness to us. I would tell anyone, this is not just genetic – anybody can get it, so it's imperative women do breast self-exams. You know more than anyone about your body.

I was asked to speak at the Women's History Month Fair, and I had been interested for a long time in talking about my experience. I love talking to people and giving them hope. The take-home message is to go with your gut feeling; don't put things off. If you notice something wrong, get in quick. Sometimes I feel like I didn't even have cancer. I was afforded the best medical care and I feel so blessed. All my medical care was covered and the military paid for my emergency leave, too. It's just amazing to me. I feel very fortunate to have been taken care of so well.

Women's History Month events

- A Women's Health Fair is from 1 to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Medical Treatment Facility. Health services include blood pressure screening, massage therapy and more. Fitness and nutritional experts will also be available and at 1 p.m. Senior Master Sgt. Michelle Sobel will also share her experiences with breast cancer. For more information, call Ext. 4573.

- A luncheon is from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. March 23 at the La Bella Vista Club. Lt. Gen. Terry Gabreski, Air Force Material Command vice commander, will speak. RSVP to Jessica Jackson at Ext. 7971 or jessica.jackson@aviano.af.mil.

- Lula Kitchen, the supervisor for Women for Church of God in Christ, will speak at 10 a.m. March 25 at the Mass Briefing Facility.

Aviano excels d



A protestor with a mock bomb strapped to his body makes his way to the Entry Control Point during the NATO Tactical Evaluation here March 7. Protestors were used to test the response of the 31st Security Forces Squadron.

By Senior Airman Sarah Gregory
31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The results from the base's recent Tactical Evaluation, conducted Feb. 26 through March 9, proved Aviano Airmen are prepared to support the Global War on Terror.

"We received an overall mission capable rating," said Master Sgt. Warren Chesebro, 31st Fighter Wing inspections superintendent. "Out of 11 areas evaluated, Aviano received six excellents and five satisfactorys."

About 115 NATO members from around the world visited the base to evaluate more than 600 Aviano Airmen. The TACEVAL consisted of two parts – the Preparation, Deployment and Integration section and the Operations Evaluation. The U.S. Air



An F-16 from the 555th Fighter Squadron

Photo by Staff Sgt. Bethann Caporaletti

uring TACEVAL

orce equivalent of this NATO evaluation a Phase I and Phase II inspection. The employment simulation ran from Feb. 26 March 2 and the operations evaluation the employment or fight phase – ran from March 5 to 9.

The TACEVAL tested the strengths and readiness of units from the 555th Aircraft Maintenance Unit and 555th Fighter Squadron to the 31st Security Forces Squadron and the 31st Logistics Readiness Squadron. Security was tested using mock protests and simulated weapons attacks, while logistics was tested when the fuels flight needed to constantly refuel jets for sorties. Maintainers ensured the F-16s could continue flying and the weapons loaders did their part to load the aircraft with the correct munitions for the tasked sortie. Pilots were

tasked in close air support and offensive counter-air operations, and were opposed by F-16s and Eurofighter 2000 aircraft flown by the Italian air force.

“It was a full spectrum evaluation – we had intruders, weapons of mass destruction attacks, conventional and mortar attacks, denial of resources and suicide bombers,” said Maj. John Bosone, 31st FW chief of inspections. “They threw everything at us. The wing was well prepared and trained hard as a team for this evaluation. The excellent grades are well deserved.”

“Aviano is the first U.S. Air Forces in Europe base to receive a PD&I evaluation, and we set the bar high for everyone that follows” said Major Bosone.

Most of the exercises Aviano experiences are conducted by the U.S. Air Force, but TACEVALs are run through NATO and are only conducted every three to five years. Aviano’s last TACEVAL was in 2004 and tested an in-place fighting force rather than a deployed force scenario.

“I’ve never been prouder of an organization I’ve commanded,” said Brig. Gen. Robert Yates, 31st FW commander. “The challenge, response of this wing and superb results we delivered in this TACEVAL are the highlight, to date, of my Air Force career. I say this because this TACEVAL tested every facet of a combat wing’s capability – to

pack up and get out of town, fight in an austere location, survive the most lethal threats in the world, all the while generating combat sorties in support of America and the NATO alliance. We shone in every challenge every way every day – once again earning our title the ‘World’s Finest.’”



Photo by Airman 1st Class Liliana Moreno

Left: Master Sgt. Gerald Bloss, 31st Civil Engineer Squadron, right, goes through the mask monitoring and removal section of a decontamination line March 6.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Liliana Moreno

Above: Staff Sgt Joseph Sundita, 31st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron weapons loader, loads a missile into an F-16.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Michael Dorus

prepares to take off for a training sortie during the TACEVAL March 7.

Play performance

The Aviano Community Theater presents "Moby Dick the Musical" at 7 p.m. today, Saturday, March 23 and 24, and at 2 p.m. March 25. All performances are at the Aviano High School multi-purpose room. Tickets can be purchased at the door and cost \$8 for adults, and \$5 for students and E-4s and below. This play may not be suitable for younger children. For more information, call Elaine Baziotis at Ext. 5330.

Registration

The University of Maryland University College is holding Term 4 registration through March 23. Classes begin March 26. For course schedules, visit www.ed.umuc.edu.

Spring cleaning

The Aviano Thrift Shop will accept spring and summer clothing items beginning Tuesday. Consignment hours are from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesdays and

Wednesdays. The thrift shop is located in Area One in the basement of the old education center and is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays. For more information, call Ext. 5402.

Lil' Bambino

The Lil' Bambino playgroup hosts a play and pizza party at the Pra de Plana Restaurant from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday. The cost is €6 for children and €8 for adults. Children under one get in free. Sign up and payment is due before Monday. Lil' Bambino meets from 10 a.m. to noon Wednesdays at the Aviano Youth Programs gym in Area One.

For more information about the playgroup or the pizza party, visit www.lil-bambino.com, e-mail lil-bambino@hotmail.com or call Jacky Hingleton at 348-121-3921.

Rabbit roundup

The 31st Fighter Wing is holding a Rabbit Roundup

at 8 a.m. Thursday on the flightline. The roundup consists of catching rabbits for relocation in the wild away from base. Family members are welcome to attend and those participating should wear bright-colored clothes and bring noisemakers.

Participants can park at the back gate and will be bussed to the north end of the runway. For more information, call Capt. Chris Lehto at Ext. 4662 or Master Sgt. Brian Saunders at Ext. 8526.

31st MXG banquet

Col. Charles L. Webb III, 31st Maintenance Group commander, cordially invites all 31st MXG members to attend the 2006 Maintenance Professional of the Year Banquet March 24 at the La Bella Vista Club. Social hour begins at 6 p.m. and dinner begins at 7 p.m.

People should R.S.V.P. with their respective first sergeants by Tuesday. Tickets cost \$10 for E-6 and below and \$14 for E-7 and above. Dress is BDUs or flight suit for military members and smart casual for civilians.

Embry-Riddle

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University offers an Aircraft Crash and Emergency Management course March 26. The class meets in the new fire station in the flightline area. For more information or to sign up, call Ext. 5140.

Study skills

A three-hour study skills seminar is from 9 a.m. to noon March 30 at the education center. The seminar helps people improve their test taking skills, reading comprehension, note taking and time management skills. To sign up, call Ext. 5330.

Site manager

The University of Oklahoma, College of Continuing Education is seeking a full-time site manager.

Applicants must have a valid U.S. identification card or be eligible to obtain one

within the regulations of the Status of Forces Agreement. The deadline for applicants to submit resumes is March 23. Interviews will be conducted the week of April 2.

To submit a resume with cover letter, e-mail apeu-admin@ou.edu. For more information, call DSN 370-6687 or commercial 0049-622-176-8118.

Spring fling

The La Bella Vista Club hosts the Spring Fling Bazaar from 3 to 7 p.m. March 30, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. March 31 and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 1.

Sure Start

The Aviano Elementary School is accepting applications for the 2007-2008 school year Sure Start Program. Sure Start is a preschool program based on the Head Start program in the United States designed to enhance positive educational outcomes for children who may need additional experiences before entering kindergarten.

All Sure Start children must be command sponsored and be four years old or turn four by Oct. 31. Four-year-olds whose sponsor is E-1 to E-4 (GS-1 to GS-4) have first priority for enrollment.

For more information or to sign up a child, stop by the Aviano Elementary School office to pick up an application.

Volunteer awards

Nominations for the annual Volunteer Awards are due by April 5. Nominations can be for anyone who has shown sustained volunteerism during the past year. It is open to federal civilians, family members, and military and federal retirees who perform outstanding volunteer community service.

Up to four individuals per installation may receive the award which is presented during National Volunteer Week April 15-21. For more information, call Leo Lear or Jane Hammonds at Ext. 5407.

Reel Times

Today, 7 p.m. – "Wild Hogs" Rated PG-13 – A group of middle-aged friends decide to rev up their routine suburban lives with a freewheeling motorcycle trip and encounter a world that holds far more than they ever bargained for. Starring: John Travolta, Tim Allen

Today, 10 p.m. – "Alpha Dog" Rated R – A 19-year-old L.A. drug dealer who comes from a good family, owns his home, several cars and enjoys partying with his friends, kidnaps his best friend's little brother in order to collect on a debt. Starring: Justin Timberlake, Bruce Willis

Saturday, 2 p.m. – "Happily N'Ever After" Rated PG – Once upon a time in Fairy Tale Land, the age-old balance between good and evil has been thrown out of whack. Starring: Sigourney Weaver, Sarah Michelle Gellar

Saturday, 5 p.m. – "Happily N'Ever After" Rated PG

Saturday, 10 p.m. – "Amityville Horror" Rated R – A family is terrorized by demonic forces after moving into a home that was the site of a grisly mass murder. Starring: Ryan Reynolds, Melissa George

Sunday, 7 p.m. – "Alpha Dog" Rated R

Monday, Noon – "Open Season" Rated G – A domesticated grizzly bear forms an unlikely friendship with a fast-talking mule deer after he finds himself stranded in the woods three days before hunting season begins.

(Titles and times are courtesy of www.aafes.com, and are subject to change.)

Fly Bys

Local events

- An international guitar workshop and concert is Saturday and Sunday at the Convento di San Francesco and teatro Accademia in Conegliano. The weekend-long concert and workshop will have guitar artists from all over the world performing and hosting seminars. For more information, visit <http://www.adgpa.it>.

- A 58th annual wine festival is Saturday through April 1 in Bertiole, south of Udine. The festival will have wine and food tasting, entertainment for children and mosaic exhibits. For more information, e-mail info@bertiole.com or visit <http://www.bertiole.com>.

- A Russian school music concert is at 11 a.m. Sunday in Udine. For more information, visit the Orchestra Filarmonica di Udine Web site at <http://www.afu.ud.it>.

- Jazz performances are Saturday through April 27 in Gorizia. For more information, visit <http://www.controtempo.org>.

- An exhibit displaying paintings of Venice in the eighth century is from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays through April 8 in Casa dei Carraresi, Treviso. For more information, visit <http://www.venezia900.it>.

Traveling

Share a traveling experience with the base. Submit stories or photos from your trip to vigileer@aviano.af.mil.

Eye-catching culture in Ravenna

**By Staff Sgt.
Colleen Wieman
31st Fighter Wing
Public Affairs**

Glittering mosaics, Dante's remains and lots of history await travelers to Ravenna.

Throughout its history, the coastal city of Ravenna was the capital of three empires – the Roman, Byzantine and Goth empires. During World War II, the city was bombed extensively and had to be rebuilt. Even though it's been rebuilt with a modern feel, the city still has many of its monuments and ancient sites.

The city's baptisteries, cathedrals, castles, mau-



One of the older cities in Italy, ruled by several different peoples, Ravenna boasts many different types of architecture.



Photos by Alex Wieman

Ravenna is famous for its sparkling mosaics dating from the fifth and sixth century. This mosaic depicting Jesus's baptism can be found on the ceiling of the Neonian baptistery.

soleums and other monuments are tourist friendly, and at some sites, visitors can take photos but without using flash. Tourists can pay a one-time fee to visit five of the historic locations including an archiepiscopal museum and a Neonian baptistery. Additionally, the city has eight buildings listed as UNESCO world heritage sites. Some of these buildings have sparkling mosaics dating from the fifth and sixth centuries.

Besides housing historic monuments, the city guards Dante Alighieri's remains. The city keeps his memory alive with events celebrating the poet and a museum that contains relics connected to Dante's fame.

Tourists visiting

Ravenna can also visit one of several botanical gardens and take nature walks throughout the city.

Getting around the city can be difficult. Most of the monuments are within the city center but there are a few that can only be reached by driving or taking a city bus. Fortunately, there are signs and tourist maps posted throughout the city for tourists to get their bearings.

Ravenna is a three and a half hour drive south of Aviano. People who take the train will need to change trains at least once to get there. For more information on Ravenna and a list of sites, visit <http://www.turismo.ra.it/>. The site is in English.

Free maps: The Airman and Family Readiness Center has local maps and tourist information. For more information, call Ext. 5407.



Courtesy photo

See the Leaning Tower with ITT. ITT will take a trip to Pisa and Bologna March 31.

Information, Tickets and Tours

Upcoming tours from the Information, Tickets and Tours office include:

- March 24 – Guided San Marino
- March 24 – Guided Ljubljana and Lake Bled
- March 24 – Guided Salzburg and Sound of Music

ITT escorts ensure the group arrives and departs from destinations as sched-

uled and will do everything possible to make the trip safe and comfortable. Escorts also provide general information about the area.

Please note weather conditions and dress accordingly. The ITT staff recommends wearing comfortable shoes because most tours involve walking. Call Ext. 5072 or 5026 for more information.

Aviano wins USAFE championship

Men's basketball defeats Lakenheath in overtime

By Senior Airman
Sarah Gregory

31st Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The Aviano Dragons men's basketball team bested home team Lakenheath Eagles with a 78-74 overtime win at the U.S. Air Forces in Europe championships March 9.

The week-long tournament began with a round robin style set of games, played to set up the team brackets. The team with the best record got the top seed slot. The Dragons came out of the round robin games in second place with four wins and one loss.

In the single-elimination playoff games, the Dragons defeated the Ramstein Rams in the second round to make it to the final game against Lakenheath.

Finally winning a MAJCOM championship feels great said Kirk Sheppard, who had previously played basketball for Pacific Air Forces while stationed at Kunsan Air Base, Korea. "There was a lot of adrenaline going on. It was a huge rush and we just knew we were going to win," said the Dragons power forward.

The big scorers in the championship game were James "Red" Taylor with 24



Photo by Airman 1st Class Jessica Snow

Dragons player James "Red" Taylor passes the ball through three defenders during the USAFE championship game against the Lakenheath Eagles.

points; Kirk Sheppard with 12 points; and Chris "Spoon" Moed with 11 points.

The men's team hopes to play against the Army's best team at the Army-Air Force championship games in Wiesbaden, Germany, March 29 to April 1.

Sheppard was selected to play on the Air Force's team for the Component Command Air North Headquarters basketball championship game held in Poznan, Poland, April 23 to 26.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Nathan Doza

Biking safely

Before heading out on the bike this season, make sure it's ready to ride. Outdoor Recreation and the Aviano Draghi Cycling Group are hosting a free bike safety clinic from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the base exchange. Bike experts will be on hand to conduct safety inspections and provide minor repairs and adjustments. Clinic is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Fly Bys

Volksmarch

The Aviano Road Runners host a Volksmarch at 8 a.m. Sunday. The group meets at the Bar Municipio in Roveredo and heads to Campeis di Pinzano al Tagliamento. For more information, call Ext. 7692 or 7404.

Soccer team

Aviano's base soccer team is hosting tryouts Tuesday and Thursday. The team plays in an Italian league and participates in U.S. Air Forces in Europe tournaments. For more information, call Jimmy Hernandez at Ext. 4153 or e-mail him at jimmy.hernandez@aviano.af.mil.

HAWC classes

The Health and Wellness Center hosts a commissary tour at 1 p.m. Wednesday; a PTL refresher class from 8 to 11 a.m. March 28 and 29 at the Buon Appetito Dining Facility; and a Lifestyle Change class from 1 to 3 p.m. March 28 at the HAWC. For more information or to sign up, call Ext. 4573.

Bowling break

The Aviano Bowling Center hosts a "Hooked up to Bowling" camp for youth ages 6 to 17 from April 9 to 12. Participants receive a custom-fitted ball, bag towel and four lessons. The cost is \$99 for adults and \$69 for youth ages 6 to 17. For more information or to sign up, call Ext. 7487.

Belly dancing

Maya Gaorry, an international belly dancer and teacher, is teaching a seminar from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. March 24 in the Area Two gym.

Softball tryouts

The Aviano Dragons men's softball team is holding tryouts for the 2007 team March 26 to 31. Tryouts begin promptly at 5 p.m. each night on softball fields three and four. Tryouts will end March 31 with the selection of the 2007 team. For more information, call Robert Ferrau at Ext. 4134 or e-mail him at robert.ferrau@aviano.af.mil.

Retirement planning

Don't stop me if you've heard this one before

By Lt. Col. Greg Brown
31st Mission Support Squadron commander

Let me first apologize to those members of the 31st Mission Support Squadron who have heard me go on and on about this subject. Also if you've been through Airman Leadership School in the last six months you heard my pitch (some call it a tirade.)

So if you've heard this before, please humor me and do yourself the favor of getting a refresher course in this very important topic. If you've not heard this before, hang on. Today's topic is going to be retirement planning and retirement benefits.

So who am I to talk about this topic? I have two credentials which allow me to speak with some authority on this issue. The first is that from 2002 to 2005 I worked at the Pentagon and was in charge of retirement planning and retirement benefits for the entire Air Force. I was the Air Force's liaison to the Veterans Administration as well as the Social Security Administration. I drafted legislation on retirement programs and briefed Congressional staffers and the President's staff on various programs.

But this experience is only the second most important credential I have. The most important credential I have is that when I came into the military I knew next to nothing about retirement planning. Piece by piece I studied, Googled, and read my way to a firm understanding of the issues involved, and most importantly, I took the actions required to set my retirement plan into motion. Bottom line is, if I can do it, anyone can do it.

The first program that the Air Force fought really hard to get, on behalf of its members, is the Thrift Savings Plan. The Thrift Savings Plan is a retirement savings and investment program for Federal employees. The purpose of the TSP is to provide retirement income. The TSP offers federal employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under 401(k) plans.

In 2000, Congress extended participation in TSP to members of the uniformed services. There are huge tax benefits to making contributions to the TSP. When you participate in the TSP, you make before-tax contributions. That means the money you contribute is taken out of

your pay before Federal and, in almost all cases, state income taxes are withheld. Therefore, the amount used to calculate your taxes is smaller and you pay less in taxes.

In addition, over the years, the money in your account will accrue earnings. These earnings are also tax-deferred. This means that you do not pay income taxes on contributions and earnings in your TSP account until you receive the money – usually after you retire (when your tax bracket may be lower). Deferring the payment of taxes means that more money stays in your account, working for you.

You may elect to contribute any dollar amount or percentage of basic pay. However, your annual dollar total cannot exceed the IRS limit which is \$15,500 for 2007. For much more information, please go to www.tsp.gov.

Although not an Air Force program, you can not talk about retirement plans without talking about Individual Retirement Accounts. The two types of IRAs for individual investors are Roth and Traditional. These IRAs have some important differences, especially when it comes to income limits and tax benefits.

The above two programs are the cornerstone of any successful retirement plan. If you don't understand them, you need to!

Of course the greatest retirement benefit the Air Force offers is that retirement check. Members who remain on active duty for 20 or more years are eligible for retirement. There are three non-disability retirement systems currently in effect. These are Final Pay, High-3 Year Average, and REDUX, which includes a \$30,000 Career Status Bonus.

Individuals who joined on or after August 1, 1986 may choose between the High-3 and REDUX systems between the 14-and 15-year point of their career. The Department of Defense has a great website at <http://www.dod.mil/militarypay/retirement/index.html> that explains these programs in great detail.

I'm going to be blunt here. As many

as 70 percent of Air Force members are choosing the REDUX retirement and the \$30,000 bonus that goes with it over the High-3 retirement. In the majority of cases it's better to take the High-3 rather than the CSB. Before you make any decision, go to the calculator at the DoD Web site mentioned above and read the article at <http://www.militarymoney.com/money/1084549756>. The wrong choice could cost you more than \$250,000 over the course of your life. This is too important of a decision to make without doing the research.

I always end my briefings with a list of action items that apply to all of us:

- Get smart on all of this. It's too important and it's no one's responsibility but yours
- Save more (don't argue – just do it!)
- Take on debt sparingly – Get rid of credit card debt!
- If possible, max out your IRA and, in particular, understand the Roth IRA

• If possible, max out your TSP

• Know what's in your credit reports. Go to www.myfico.com (You're entitled to three free reports a year)

• If investing in mutual funds, understand the advantages of no-load funds

• If eligible for CSB, run the numbers – it does not make sense in most cases

• Document all service related injuries (you may be eligible for Veteran's Benefits upon leaving service)

• Establish an emergency fund to cover a financial crisis

Due to the limit of time and space, I have not mentioned additional important retirement programs like Veteran's Group Life Insurance, Social Security, Tricare for Life, VA Disability, Survivor Benefit Plan, etc. I'll save those for another time.

Tom Snyder at the Airman and Family Readiness Center serves as the 31st Fighter Wing personal financial management consultant and is always happy to help. Additionally, I am willing to talk about these issues at anytime to anyone, whether you're a first term Airman or days away from retirement.

A Traditional IRA's key advantage is tax deferral, while possible deductibility means the potential for tax savings today. Any earnings you make may grow tax deferred until retirement.

In a Roth IRA, you make contributions on an after-tax basis, and any earnings grow free of federal taxes, which means you don't get a tax deduction now, but you won't need to pay taxes on the earnings later. This is generally considered the more advantageous of the two IRAs.